

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

AGENDA ITEM

Update on the Committee on Transfer and Articulation
Coordinating Board for Higher Education
October 9, 2003

DESCRIPTION

The CBHE Committee on Transfer and Articulation (COTA) has responsibility to implement the board's Credit Transfer and Dual Credit policies and to work with institutional representatives to ensure successful student transfer. The intent of this board item is to provide an update on COTA activities.

Background

The CBHE has statutory responsibility to promote and facilitate the transfer of students between institutions of higher education within the state. COTA serves as a standing CBHE advisory committee to ensure that effective transfer and articulation policies are developed, implemented, evaluated, and monitored. Within this context, COTA also has the challenge of identifying measures of success that will help inform discussions about the effectiveness of Missouri's transfer and articulation system. COTA is composed of eight presidents/chancellors (or their representatives) with representation from each sector. COTA membership is included in the attachment.

COTA has completed its review of survey results from institutions on dual credit practices. As a result of this review, COTA has established a list of 31 public, independent, and proprietary institutions that have self-reported compliance with the board's dual credit policy guidelines. This list includes two institutions with conditional compliance. This list will be published on the DHE web site and is attached.

In recent months, COTA has undertaken several projects. At the request of transfer and articulation officers, a revision of the job description of responsibilities for this post has been developed and is undergoing a final review by COTA. The generic job description, which will also be posted on the DHE web site, is attached.

COTA has also developed a list of Frequently Asked Questions and responses to those questions for posting on the DHE web site. The FAQ covers such topics as how transfer officers may keep current on new programs and program changes, tracking transfer student success, the 42-hour block of general education, and the appeals process that is available for resolving transfer conflicts between institutions. The FAQ, which is also undergoing final review by COTA and will be posted on the DHE web site, is attached.

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Conclusions

Transfer and articulation remain priorities of the CBHE and the DHE. The board's public policies associated with dual credit and general education represent important initiatives that support an efficient, fair, and predictable transfer system that is sensitive to student needs.

Upcoming projects for COTA include preparing an annual report for presentation to the board, fostering the transferability of credit from proprietary institutions, identifying non-traditional credits that institutions of higher learning will accept, and reestablishing a statewide transfer conference for discussion of complex transfer issues.

STATUTORY REFERENCE

Section 173.020(3) and 173.005.2(6), RSMo, Responsibilities of the Coordinating Board
Section 167.223, RSMo, High schools may offer postsecondary course options—fees

RECOMMENDED ACTION

This is an information item only.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Committee on Transfer and Articulation Membership
Attachment B: Institutions Reporting Compliance with Dual Credit Policy
Attachment C: Generic Job Description
Attachment D: Frequently Asked Questions

CBHE Committee on Transfer and Articulation

September 22, 2003

Dr. Karen Herzog (Chair)
President
East Central College
1964 Prairie Dell Road
Union, MO 63084
(636) 583-5195 ext. 2201
Fax: (636) 583-6602
E-mail: herzogk@eastcentral.edu

Ms. Karen Finkenkeller
Director
ITT Technical Institute
13505 Lakefront Drive
Earth City, MO 63045
(314) 298-7800
Fax: (314) 298-0559
E-mail: kfinkenkeller@ITT-tech.edu

Dr. R. Alton Lacey
President
Missouri Baptist University
One College Park Drive
St. Louis, MO 63141-8698
(314) 434-1115
Fax: (314) 434-7596
E-mail: lacey@mobap.edu

Dr. Stephen Lehmkuhle
Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of Missouri System
309 University Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
(573) 882-6396
Fax: (573) 884-4204
E-mail: lehmkuhles@umsystem.edu

Dr. Julio S. Leon
President
Missouri Southern State University – Joplin
3950 East Newman Road
Joplin, MO 64801-1595
(417) 624-8181
Fax: (417) 625-9781
E-mail: leon-j@mssu.edu

Dr. Walter Nolte
President
North Central Missouri College
1301 Main Street
Trenton, MO 64683
(660) 359-5113
Fax: (660) 359-2899
E-mail: wnolte@mail.ncmc.cc.mo.us

Dr. James Scanlon
President
Missouri Western State College
4525 Downs Drive
St. Joseph, MO 64507-2294
(816) 271-4200
Fax: (816) 271-5982
E-mail: Scanlon@mwsc.edu

Dr. Henry Shannon
Chancellor
St. Louis Community Colleges
300 South Broadway
St. Louis, MO 63102
(314) 539-5150
Fax: (314) 539-5499
E-mail: hshannon@stlcc.cc.mo.us

Mr. Quentin C. Wilson
Commissioner of Higher Education
Coordinating Board for Higher Education
3515 Amazonas Drive
Jefferson City, MO 65109-5717
(573) 751-1876
Fax: (573) 751-6635
E-mail: Quentin.wilson@mocbhe.gov

Support Staff - CBHE

Dr. Robert B. Stein
Associate Commissioner
Coordinating Board for Higher Education
3515 Amazonas Drive
Jefferson City, MO 65109-5717
(573) 751-1794
Fax: (573) 526-5431
E-mail: Robert.stein@mocbhe.gov

Ms. Laura L. Vedenhaupt
Administrative Assistant
Coordinating Board for Higher Education
3515 Amazonas Drive
Jefferson City, MO 65109-5717
(573) 751-1798
Fax: (573) 526-5431
E-mail: laura.vedenhaupt@mocbhe.gov

Institutions Reporting Compliance with COTA's Dual Credit Policy Guidelines

1. Central Methodist College
2. Central Missouri State University
3. Crowder College
4. Drury University
5. East Central College
6. Hannibal-LaGrange College*
7. Jefferson College
8. Lincoln University
9. Lindenwood University
10. Metropolitan Community Colleges
11. Mineral Area College
12. Missouri Southern State College
13. Missouri Baptist University
14. Missouri Valley College
15. Missouri Western State College
16. Moberly Area Community College
17. North Central Missouri College
18. Northwest Missouri State University
19. Ozarks Technical Community Colleges
20. Rockhurst University
21. Saint Louis University
22. Southeast Missouri State University
23. Southwest Baptist University
24. Southwest Missouri State University
25. Southwest Missouri State University – West Plains
26. State Fair Community College
27. Three Rivers Community College
28. University of Missouri – Kansas City
29. University of Missouri – St. Louis*
30. Wentworth Military Academy and Junior College
31. William Woods University

*Conditional compliance

**Coordinating Board for Higher Education
Committee on Transfer and Articulation (COTA)
Recommended Responsibilities for
Transfer/Articulation Officers**

Major Assumptions:

- The duties of transfer/articulation officers will vary from institution to institution.
- There are multiple ways of ensuring that the COTA recommended responsibilities for transfer/articulation officers are fulfilled.
- Institutional assignments for transfer/articulation responsibilities may be to one or more individuals.

Effective transfer and articulation includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Acting as an ombudsperson for students who wish to resolve questions regarding their transfer status after other appeals have been exhausted
- Maintaining an understanding of the institutional data and analysis of transfer students
- Monitoring the institutional transfer credit evaluation process to ensure that institutional and statewide policies are being implemented as designed
- Informing the institutional president/chancellor of any developing issues related to transfer and articulation
- Advising the appropriate campus groups regarding the practical impact of curricula changes on transfer and articulation
- Facilitating the process of developing articulation agreements for apprenticeship, certificates, AA, AS, and AAS Degrees by working with the chief academic officer or other designated personnel
- Aiding communication of curricular changes between institutions.
- Developing with the transfer and articulation officers at other institutions the presentation of transfer and articulation policies on web sites
- Participating in statewide conversations in a public venue on transfer and articulation issues

CBHE Credit Transfer Policy Frequently Asked Questions

AGENCY AND ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

1. What is the CBHE?

The Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) serves as the state's higher education planning agency, assuming major responsibility for the development of state policy for higher education, the recommendation of budgets for public institutions, and the distribution of regular reports to the General Assembly, the governor, and the public concerning questions of access, quality, and efficiency.

2. What is the role of the CBHE in transfer and articulation?

Missouri statute 173.005(6) defines the CBHE's role in transfer and articulation:

The Coordinating Board shall establish guidelines to promote and facilitate the transfer of students between institutions of higher education within the state.

CBHE policy guidelines include a plan for the transfer of general education credits and for the transfer of associate of arts degrees among public institutions and independent signatory institutions. Other transfer issues are addressed by institution-to-institution articulation agreements. All transfer plans and articulation agreements follow general guidelines outlined in the state's policy framework. These guidelines include an appeals process to follow when the system is not functioning to the satisfaction of students or institutions.

3. Are all colleges and universities obligated to abide by CBHE policies?

Each Missouri institution has a separate, independent board that is responsible for policy adoption and implementation. As a coordinating board, the CBHE has limited statutory authority and cannot control institutional behavior. Missouri uses compromise and consensus building rather than legislation to develop and promote most of its public policies for higher education, including those policies affecting transfer and articulation.

4. What is the DHE and what is its role in transfer and articulation?

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) is the administrative arm of the Coordinating Board. DHE staff provides support for the Committee on Transfer and Articulation (COTA).

5. What is COTA?

COTA is the CBHE Committee on Transfer and Articulation. Eight presidents/chancellors serve as COTA members with three from public two-year institutions, three from public four-year institutions (with one from the University of Missouri System), one from independent four-year institutions and one from independent/proprietary two-year institutions. COTA has major responsibility for reviewing the board's transfer/articulation policy guidelines, making recommendations for any changes to transfer/articulation policy guidelines, and for monitoring the

implementation of new transfer/articulation initiatives. COTA also serves as an appeals board for formal complaints about transfer/articulation practices. Department of Higher Education (DHE) staff serves as support for COTA.

6. What is transfer and articulation?

Transfer is the process whereby a student with previous postsecondary educational experience gains admission to another postsecondary institution and seeks to have the credits successfully earned at the previous institution(s) apply toward graduation requirements for a specific course of study at the receiving institution.

Articulation is the process whereby postsecondary institutions seek to foster the smooth transfer of students by developing agreements that specify in advance the terms, conditions, and expectations that shall be applied to transfer students. Articulation agreements may apply to specific courses and/or to specific degree programs.

7. Why is transfer and articulation important?

Transfer and articulation is important to provide seamless movement of students among Missouri institutions as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.

8. Who are the transfer and articulation officers, and what do they do?

*Each institution has been encouraged to identify an individual(s) to perform the duties of the transfer and articulation officer. A generic description of responsibilities is found on the DHE web site at <<insert **link** when available>>.*

9. With frequent changes in curriculum, how can transfer officers keep course equivalency agreements current?

This is an ongoing challenge that is at the very core of transcript analysis, and there are no simple answers. Transfer officers should stay informed about curricular changes on their own campuses, particularly in lower-division courses that transfer students may have taken at other institutions. Transfer officers should communicate curriculum changes to colleagues at other institutions and ask that they do the same. Changes in course equivalencies that institutions have on the DHE web site should also be communicated to DHE staff in a timely manner.

10. How can transfer officers keep current on program changes that may affect existing or future articulation agreements?

Institutions submit information to DHE about changes to existing programs such as title changes, program additions, and changes in Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes, as well as proposals for new programs. All requests for new programs are posted on the DHE web site by the fifteenth of each month for public comment. All program actions (program changes as well as new programs) are reported to the CBHE at each regular meeting. The program inventory for each institution, available on the DHE web site at <http://www.dhe.mo.gov/Institutions/moinst.htm>, is updated with the most current information after each CBHE meeting.

GENERAL INFORMATION

11. Is it possible to establish common course numbers in Missouri?

Missouri has emphasized the importance of competencies and content rather than numbers or titles in its most recent approach to credit transfer.

12. Is there a common method for computing a transfer student's GPA?

There is no common method as of July 2003. As a starting point, COTA will survey institutions to learn the extent of variation in institutional practice concerning the treatment of a transfer student's GPA.

13. If a sending institution offers a four- hour course, can that course transfer as equivalent to a five- hour course at the receiving institution?

There is a great deal of unpredictability in the system but the most logical action in this case would be for the receiving institution to accept in transfer four credit hours. Institutions are encouraged to facilitate conversations of course equivalency to prevent repeating the process for each student. Institutions should consider evaluating equivalency by program, rather than by evaluating the equivalency of individual courses.

14. If a student is enrolled in a program, how should that student be treated when an institution changes the program requirements?

Institutions may choose to follow the "catalog rule." Students currently enrolled in a program that undergoes a change are usually given the option either to remain with the program and meet its requirements or to switch to the revised program and meet the requirements of the changed program.

15. Are institutions tracking the success of transfer students?

Several institutions have designed their own tracking system for analysis of transfer student success. In addition, a consortium of public institutions is utilizing databases provided by the DHE to track student retention and performance between 1996-2002. The databases are updated annually. For information on the DHE database, contact Wei Zhou at Wei.Zhou@mocbhe.gov or at (573) 751-2401.

CREDIT TRANSFER POLICY

16. What is the web address of the state's credit transfer policies?

The CBHE's credit transfer guidelines are available on the DHE web site at <http://www.dhe.mo.gov/Acadaf/rs/gepolicy.htm>.

17. Does the policy also cover out-of-state institutions?

The CBHE policy guidelines apply to Missouri institutions only.

18. What is the status of the general education policy implementation?

On June 8, 2000, the CBHE revised its Credit Transfer policy to include guidelines for a 42-hour block of transfer-guaranteed general education credit. In October 2002, all

public institutions, with the exception of the University of Missouri–Columbia, and several independent institutions began implementation of general education programs that are in alignment with state policy guidelines and are in support of the respective missions of the institutions. Information about CBHE’s general education policy guidelines is on the DHE web site at <http://www.dhe.mo.gov/Acadaf/rs/gepolicy.htm>.

19. What is the University of Missouri – Columbia’s position on a statewide general education policy?

The University of Missouri – Columbia (MU) is supportive of the statewide policy and is working to clarify its general education program to facilitate transfer students and to create more compatibility with the transfer block. Since most degree programs at MU have prerequisites that can be met by general education courses, MU prefers that transfer be facilitated by more specific transfer and articulation agreements. Students planning for a specific major and/or planning to enroll in a specific school or college at MU are encouraged to select general education courses that meet college and program requirements rather than assuming the transfer block will include appropriate prerequisite courses. MU has recently redefined its general education for lower division students as a 39-hour block, which includes College Algebra with a grade in the C range and a math proficiency course with College Algebra as a prerequisite. Although MU does not currently accept the 42-hour block as completion of its general education requirements, students are encouraged to check course equivalencies at MU’s web site <http://registrar.missouri.edu/Catalog/index.htm> and to choose Course Equivalencies from the list. MU is committed to working with students who have additional questions. For further information, contact Ann Korschgen, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, at (573) 882-7651 or via email at korschgena@missouri.edu.

20. What is the rationale behind the 42-hour block of general education credit?

Previously, Missouri’s approach to general education had been based on seat time and credit hour production, relying on course titles and descriptions to facilitate the transferability of credit from one institution to another. Increasingly, states are looking at competency or proficiency-based systems as a way to promote educational reform, to ensure better alignment between K-12 and higher education, and to encourage better preparation and performance of students.

According to the statewide guidelines, general education:

- *Establishes the curricular foundation of the institution;*
- *Encourages students to acquire and use the intellectual tools, knowledge and creative capabilities necessary to study the world;*
- *Furnishes students with skills that enable them to deepen that understanding and to communicate to others;*
- *Equips students for success in specialized areas of study and to become educated persons, active citizens, and effective contributors to their own life and to the general welfare of others;*
- *Introduces students to the traditional disciplines of the arts and sciences;*
- *Alerts students to the connections between the traditional disciplines and the world;*
- *Informs students that the world is understood in different ways;*

- *Provides students with the means to come to terms, intelligently and humanely, with this diversity of understanding; and*
- *Helps students acquire appropriate investigative, interpretative, and communicative competencies.*

Designing a 42-hour block of general education credit and encouraging students to complete that block at one institution are perceived to be the best means to achieve these goals for student mastery of general education knowledge and skills.

21. How do transfer officers locate the most up-to-date list of institutions abiding by the state's guidelines for general education?

DHE staff strives to maintain an accurate listing of institutions abiding by the state's credit transfer policy guidelines. This list of institutions is available on the DHE web site at <http://www.dhe.mo.gov/Acadafrcs/credittrans.htm>. Information provided on the DHE web site is updated on a regular basis. Institutions are encouraged to notify DHE staff of any information on the web site that is inaccurate or incomplete.

22. What process is available if an institution wants to remove itself from the list of institutions abiding by the state's agreement on general education transfer?

Institutions should notify DHE staff should they choose to withdraw from participation in the credit transfer policy.

23. How are students treated by institutions not participating in the state's credit transfer agreement?

Several Missouri institutions that are not participating in the state's credit transfer agreement have expressed their commitment to work with transfer students to ensure a smooth transition from one institution to another. Students transferring to these institutions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Missouri's public, independent, and proprietary institutions are committed to ensuring that all students are treated equitably and fairly as they transfer from one institution to another.

STUDENT ISSUES

24. Do students have to complete an associate degree before transferring in order to receive credit for the 42-hour block?

Completion of an associate degree is strongly encouraged but not required. Some institutions do not offer a two- (2) year degree; therefore, students will by necessity transfer without completion of an associate degree.

25. What can students or institutions do when a course that was previously accepted for credit transfer is no longer accepted because it is not included in the 42-hour general education block?

If students complete courses outside of the general education block, the students are acknowledging the possibility that the course will not be accepted for transfer credit at other Missouri higher education institutions. Institutions are expected to evaluate courses outside the 42-hour block on an individual basis. The general education credit

transfer policy is intended to encourage students to complete a comprehensive general education program that addresses core competencies. Completing a 42-hour block of general education credit at one institution increases the likelihood that students will be successful in their higher education goals.

26. Since some institutions are participating in the state's agreement on general education transfer and others are not, what advice should be given to students interested in transfer?

Students transferring between institutions that are abiding by the statewide guidelines are to be informed that a completed 42-hour block of credit will be received as equivalent and as having fulfilled the 42-hour block of credit at the receiving institution. Students should also be informed that if they transfer prior to completing a 42-hour block of credit, the receiving institution has the choice of whether to transfer partial blocks as equivalent or to do a course-by-course evaluation. In addition, students should be informed that institutions are permitted to require additional general education hours beyond the block of 42 credit hours. Whatever is required beyond 42 credit hours for non-transfer students will hold for transfer students as well. Transfer students should familiarize themselves with the degree requirements of the receiving institution and the course prerequisites they may need to address after transfer.

For a student transferring from a school that is not participating in the state's agreement on general education transfer to a school that is participating, the student should be informed that the receiving institution would determine how much of the 42-hour block will transfer and what general education requirements will be satisfied.

27. Is there an appeals process for sending and receiving institutions?

Institutions are expected to have internal processes for appeal available to transfer students who believe they have not been treated fairly. Responses to the appeal are expected to proceed in a timely manner. Sending institutions are encouraged to become advocates for student appeals when they are perceived to have merit.

Institutions are also able to appeal when there is a belief that a transfer practice, procedure, requirement, or policy of another institution is not in accord with the principles or spirit of the state transfer articulation guidelines. A full description of the appeal process is located in the state's credit transfer policy at <http://www.dhe.mo.gov/Acadaf/rs/gepolicy.htm#appeal>.

28. What options are available when other institutions ignore requests for information by being evasive or completely non-responsive?

The board's Principles of Good Practice for Credit Transfer states that the transfer process should be efficient, predictable, and sensitive to student needs. Being evasive or non-responsive to requests from other institutions is not acceptable. The appeals process outlined in the state's credit transfer guidelines encourages institutions to appeal to COTA when another institution's practices are out of alignment with the state's guidelines.

29. What is the best advice for students concerning the transferability of general education credit?

While not required, transfer officers should encourage students to complete an institution's 42-hour block of general education prior to transfer. Receiving institutions that accept block transfers are not required to determine course-by-course equivalencies, thereby ensuring efficiency, predictability, and sensitivity to student needs. Students intending to transfer prior to completion of a 42-hour block of general education credit or intending to transfer to an institution not abiding by the state's guidelines should be encouraged to visit with the receiving institution to ensure that courses will transfer. It is always advisable for students, once they are aware of their intent to transfer, to work with both the sending and the receiving institutions to ensure seamless transfer. Students should be encouraged to clarify any mixed messages they are receiving with the sending institution's transfer officer.

Students should expect to receive the benefit of the doubt during the implementation phase of the general education policy. Students should be encouraged to share with advisors and/or transfer officers their experiences in transferring so that problems can be identified and resolved in a timely manner, not only for the students transferring, but also for future transfer students.

Students should be informed of institutional and state-level appeals processes, and a sending institution is expected to review each student's complaint, and to become an advocate for the transfer student when the institution believes that the student is not being treated fairly by a receiving institution. Clearly, reform of general education will present difficult and challenging problems that will need to be addressed as institutions operate in good faith to meet the intent of the policy.

30. How are institutions denoting completion of a block of general education on student transcripts?

It is COTA's intent that transcripts from sending institutions contain a seal or stamp attesting to the student's completion of that institution's 42-hour block. Some institutions have automatic mechanisms in place that perform this function while other institutions rely on the student applying for a block seal on their transcripts.

TRANSFER FROM PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS

31. Why are institutions that are not accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (NCA) participating in the state's credit transfer agreement?

The CBHE's credit transfer guidelines apply to postsecondary institutions with regional accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission or national accreditation recognized by the US Department of Education and Certified by the CBHE. Public and independent institutions are encouraged to develop program-to-program articulation agreements with regionally and nationally accredited institutions.

32. How should institutions accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (NCA) treat general education credit transferred from institutions without similar accreditation?

The acceptance of credit in transfer is an institutional decision. Institutions complying with the state's credit transfer policy guidelines are encouraged to accept transfer credit from other Missouri institutions including those accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and those postsecondary institutions that have national accreditation recognized by the US Department of Education and are certified by the CBHE to operate in Missouri.

33. If a student has an associate degree from a proprietary institution and some credits are vocational in nature, will other institutions accept those vocational credits as electives?

The decision to accept vocational courses as electives rests with the receiving institution. Many proprietary schools have a block of general education, though not a full 42-hour block. Any proprietary school students denied transfer credit due to disagreements or misunderstandings about the comparability of accreditation standards (regional versus national accreditation) have the right to appeal such decisions to COTA.